

**Finance Committee**

**April 6, 2020**

**6:00 p.m.**

**The Meeting was held via conference call through the WebEx platform. Alderman, staff, the press and the public could attend the meeting by calling 312.535.8110 and using Access Code 629-471-675.**

Chairman Tom Ptak called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Present:** Alderman Ptak, Alderman Demes, Alderman Lavieri, Alderman Jeppson, Alderman Herndon

**Absent:**

**Others present:** City Clerk Carrie Brown, Finance Director John Duncan, City Engineer Brian Brown

A quorum was present.

Alderman Lavieri questioned three charges under the Street Department on the March 23, 2020 bills from Tapco for railroad crossing signs. He questioned if the City gets reimbursed for the signs or if they are signs the City is responsible for purchasing. Finance Director Duncan stated that he will research the charges a bit further.

Alderman Lavieri referenced the MFT Resolution on the council agenda for approval this evening and wondered if it reflects the total budget estimated for both projects and bond payments. City Engineer Brian Brown stated that it does reflect both and that we are within the \$425,000 budget. Mr. Brown said a few projects were eliminated to stay within budget. He said IDOT has already approved the projects at that amount. Mr. Brown stated that there are 19 locations within the program. Any patching projects are paid from the water and sewer fund, and one location will be paid out of the TIF funds. All other locations are paid out of MFT funds.

Finance Director John Duncan then did a brief overview for the committee of the actions taken to address COVID-19 challenges. He began by stating that the City had two goals both of equal importance. The goals included maintaining City services with minimal risk and ensuring the safety of our employees. To achieve those goals, it was thought best to break down into teams.

In regard to staffing in the Water Billing Department, Mr. Duncan stated that due to the number of phone calls that are received, it was important to have someone in office Monday through Friday. City Hall has been closed to limit exposure to staff. His department has split shifts where one employee works in the morning and one in the afternoon. Mr. Duncan explained that he has been able to give both employees projects to take home to work on during working hours outside of the office. Jessica Kaszynski has been working on a back-tax issue relating the Park Board prior to the City taking over their finances, and Crystal Hancock has been working with Republic on auditing address listings to ensure garbage service is being properly billed.

The Public Works department has been split into teams where employees work three 10-hour days using Saturdays. Normally, by the contract, in a ten-hour day, employees would be paid 2 hours of overtime for each of those days, which is a total of 6 hours of overtime or 9 hours of straight time. Instead of doing all that, employees have agreed to a 40 for 30 rotation which keeps them working ten-hour days.

Superintendent Jeff Bumgarner assigns daily duties and because the crews are split in half, it allows workers to drive in trucks alone therefore further reducing exposure risk.

City employees who must be in close proximity to others, such as our Fire, Police and at times Public Works employees, have been supplied with personal protective equipment. The City of Peru received 1,000 masks, of which 500 were given to La Salle.

Finance Director Duncan explained that this situation has brought on many human resource challenges including working through contracts and establishing policies for employees who may be sick or have been exposed to the virus. The Mayor sent an email to employees weeks ago outlining procedures that should be followed if an employee has symptoms such as a fever or dry cough or other associated symptoms of the virus. Employees are required to report this to the City and are mandated to be off work until they have a doctor's note authorizing them to return to work.

The City is compliant with the Corona Virus Family First Act which applies to anyone with less than 500 employees, however this does not apply to First Responders, such as Police and Fire. The Act states that if an employee presents with symptoms, we are obligated to pay them an additional 80 hours of sick time. This also applies if an employee is exposed in a high-risk situation such as a spouse or family member tests positive or has been exposed. The Act also covers employees who must be home with school aged children due to them being displaced because of the virus.

Mr. Duncan said his office has been extremely busy with staff receiving many calls about water bills, garbage issue and other questions.

Finance Director Duncan stated that as the aldermen are aware, the City has discussed a potential new hire to fill the position of Director of Public Relation and Community Development. Mr. Duncan stated that having someone in that role would be very helpful at this time as in his opinion we could definitely use someone with that skill set to assist with getting information out to our residents.

Alderman Ptak asked if any of our employees have called in with symptoms. Mr. Duncan stated that one police officer was tested a few weeks ago, but the test was negative. He was off, but was allowed back to work once he received the negative test.

Chairman Ptak asked if Mr. Duncan knew the amount of the back taxes owes by the Park Board. Finance Director Duncan stated that it is between \$70,000 and \$90,000. He explained that the City was made aware of this issue when the City took over the finances of the Park Board. He explained that for a period of several years the Park Board was making entries into Quick Books with the assumption that the federal payroll tax deductions were being automatically deducted and sent to the IRS. Our CPA had alerted the board of this issue, but no action was ever taken. Alderman Ptak asked how we are going to take care of this. Mr. Duncan explained that in his opinion and perhaps it is premature, but it is unrealistic to think there will be a lot of activities in the park this year. Therefore, there could be a loss in the revenue stream but on the flip side of that there will also not be many expenses. Mr. Duncan thought it could be feasible that they could sustain the payments this year alone.

Alderman Lavieri asked if residents are able to pay cash at local banks for their water bills. Mr. Duncan stated that he is not aware of that. He explained that residents have the option to pay on-line which can be done through the City's webpage by clicking on Pay My Utility Bill, they can set-up automatic debit

from an account of their choosing, or they can leave payment in the drop box behind City Hall. The drop box is checked two to three times a day and the box does have a surveillance camera.

Joh Duncan said the majority of residents are paying prior to the due date. Alderman Demes asked if we have had any complaints about the garbage company not taking large items or yard waste.

Mr. Duncan stated that residents can put the brown yard waste bags in a dumpster positioned near the tennis courts at Hegeler Park. This is only for yard waste in bags, not branches. Residents can drop off branches at the City drop off area by veering to the right as you approach Oakwood Cemetery which is located off of the Troy Grove blacktop.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie Brown".

Carrie Brown, City Clerk